

Syllabus Plus Users Information Update – July/August 2005 Edition 10

Introduction

This newsletter is for users of Syllabus Plus Timetabling software across campus, and anybody else who might be interested in the program. Apologies for the late issuing of this edition – building the 2006 timetable whilst sorting out semester 2 2005 issues has kept the timetabling office rather busy over the last while.

Current Syllabus Plus Issues

2006 Database

The timetabling office is currently constructing the 2006 timetable. The draft version is set for on September 19th. Depending upon your level of access to Syllabus Plus, you will be given access to make changes or enter bookings in the 2006 database at some stage over the next couple of months. The timetable office will contact you to let you know when you will have access to the system. Everybody will have access to the database after the final version of the timetable is released on September 30th.

Write Back Error

For those of you who are already using the 2006 database, we have noticed that the WriteBack Error has been appearing again. If you do notice that you have a write back error, please notify our office (contact details below) and download a new image from the server. More information about Write-Back problems can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

Syllabus Plus Upgrade

Our office has recently received a copy of Version 3.5.0 of Syllabus Plus. We will be looking at upgrading to this new version sometime towards the end of the year after it has been properly evaluated. Our office will advise you of exact dates for the upgrade (and what you will need to do) over the next few months.

Syllabus Plus Tip – Invert Selection

Just a quick tip for this month's issue, but it is a handy one. The 'Invert Selection' tool selects unselected objects in a list. It can be found under the 'Edit' menu

Example

1. Open up Syllabus Plus
2. Go to the 'Timetabler' menu
3. Select 'Activities' (or any other object type)
4. Select one or more activities
5. From the Edit Menu, select 'Invert Selection'

All of the activities that were not selected, now should be, and visa-versa.

Contact Us

Please feel free to get in touch with us if you have any feedback
sa-timetable@unimelb.edu.au, or give us a call.

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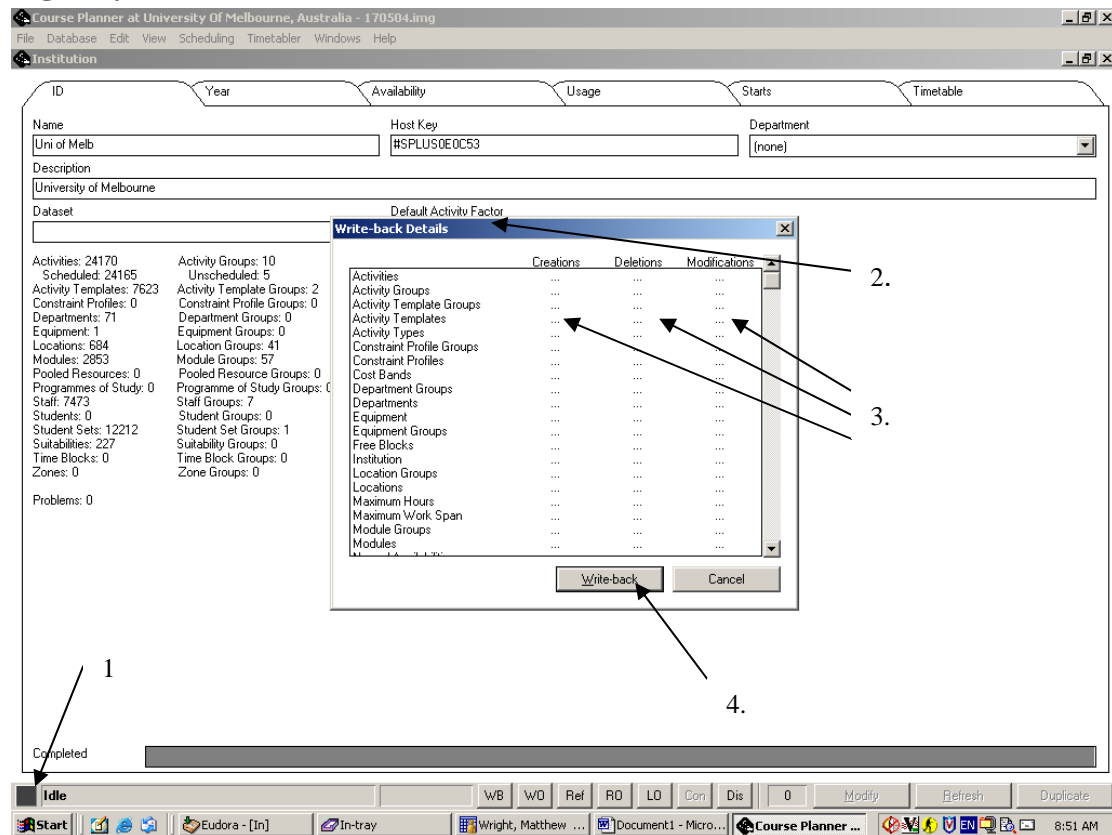
Matt Wright - Timetabling Systems Support x43690

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Appendix 1 – Write Back Issue

Fig 1. Syllabus Plus Write-Back Details



How do I know if I have the Write-Back problem?

Under normal circumstances, if you have a black box (1.) down the bottom of your screen, it means that you have made some sort of a change in Syllabus Plus (e.g. created, altered or deleted a booking), and that this change needs to be sent through to the server.

You can do this by clicking on the black box (Please note that bookings and changes made through the 'Location Booking' screen are generally sent (written back) to the Syllabus Plus server automatically).

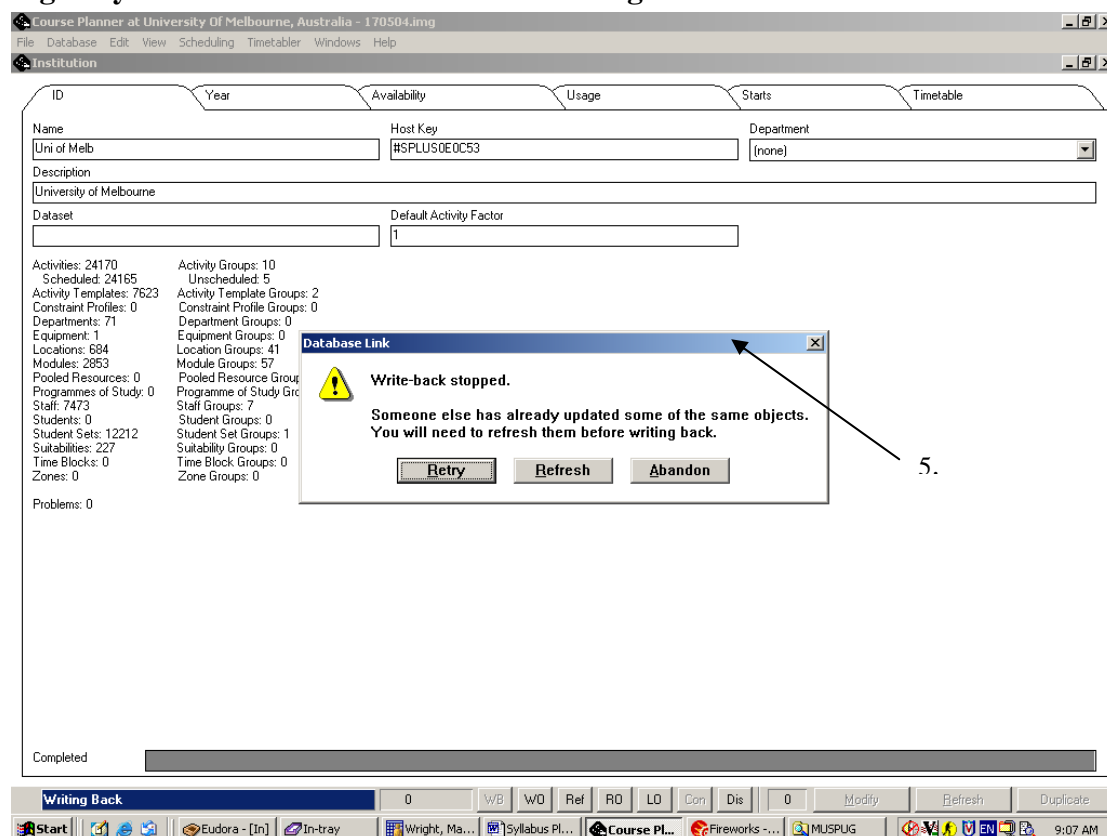
This will bring up a summary of the information to be sent to the server(2.).

In the case of the Write-Back problem, the black box can appear even if you have made no alterations. In this situation the summary screen will show that you have no changes to write-back(3.). Effectively, the program is asking you to write-back changes, even though you have no changes to write-back.

If you then click on the Write-Back button (4.) to continue, you may come up with the following error message (5.).

If the error does arise, it will most likely be evident when you first load up your image for the day. You should not have anything to write back when you first load up – If you do, it is most likely an error

Fig 2. Syllabus Plus Write-Back Error Message



What can I do if this happens then?

The only thing that you can do in this situation is abandon the image and shut down Syllabus Plus (Click on ‘No’ when asked if you would like to Write-Back your image (you can’t) and select ‘Discard’ when asked if you would like to save it)

The error message above can also appear even when you have legitimate changes to Write-back. In this situation, all that you can do is abandon the Write-Back and exit from Syllabus Plus as described above. Any work that you have not written-back to the server will need to be redone, and subsequently written back.

In order to avoid significant inconvenience should this problem strike, we recommend that you regularly write-back changes to the database.

What do I do if I identify that I have the Write-Back error?

Unfortunately, in this situation, you will generally be forced to download a fresh image from the server (Please contact our office if you are unsure of how to do this). We recognise that this takes a significant period of time, but at present, there is no other way around the problem.

So what’s causing this problem?

If I can get a little bit technical, the problem occurs in the following scenario.

1. Alice & Bob are Syllabus Plus users
2. Bob makes a couple of changes and writes them back to the server.
3. At the same time, Alice is receiving information from the server.
4. The system ‘trips up’, and Alice does not receive all of the information that Bob has sent to the server

5. Alice's machine is now 'out of sync'. As the information on her machine is different to that on the server, Syllabus Plus makes the assumption that she has a change to make. The Write-Back button therefore appears on screen, even though Alice has nothing to write back.

What is the timetable office doing to fix this problem?

We believe that the problem is being partially caused by the large number of changes that naturally take place as the database is constructed. The server on which tequila is housed is also running out of memory at present, which could be affecting its performance. These two problems combined are likely to be causing the problem. We are hopeful that the problem will not appear after the timetable is fully constructed and/or the server performance is improved.